



# Questions & Answers Plan Change 9

## Now that this plan change has been notified, how much water is available for allocation?

Plan change 9 reinforces the default limit to surface water allocation already identified in the Regional Water and Land Plan. This limit is 10% of Q<sub>5</sub> 7 day low flow (The lowest flow that on average occurs once every 5 years). For groundwater there is no numeric limit in the Regional Water and Land Plan, but the current practice of allocating a limit of 35% of average aquifer recharge is confirmed. These limits are backed by a policy to generally decline new applications that would cause the limit to be exceeded. This sets a firmer line regarding the limits to allocation.

The Assessment of Water Availability and Estimates of Current Allocation Levels Report available on Councils website assists water users to access information about water availability and to understand the principles of how availability is assessed.

## What does “surface water” mean and how is it different to “ground water”?

Surface water is the water that we can see in rivers, streams, lakes and springs. Groundwater is water from within the ground (aquifers) and normally needs a bore or well to access.

## Does this mean metering for everyone in the region?

Plan Change 9 means metering for everyone with resource consents to take water. This confirms current practice of requiring all new resource consents to meter and report water use. The plan change increases the frequency of reporting. Daily reporting will be required for all surface water takes above 5 litres per second and groundwater takes above 5 litres per second. We'll be working with industry groups to implement the metering and because of metering we'll be able to capture information about water use for both the users and Council business. By providing information on the amount of water taken, meters assist us to ensure that the amount is consistent with requirements, to understand patterns of use and potential impacts on stream ecology or aquifers.

We've had positive feedback from consent holders about the use of telemetry and the cost savings achieved by automated monitoring.

The government has also recognised the importance of water metering. The water metering regulations will require all consented takes with a rate of take of 5 litres per second or more to be metered and reported by 10 November 2016. Council's additional requirements only apply to consents as they are renewed but the governments regulations apply to both existing and new resource consents.

New provisions in the plan change require metering and monthly reporting where total water use on a property, including stock drinking water and shed use, exceeds the permitted activity volume of 35m<sup>3</sup> groundwater or 15m<sup>3</sup> surface water. This will particularly apply to dairy farmers. We expect that most herds over 270 cows that will require a meter for drinking water and another for dairy shed water use.



### **Is Council supporting water transfers when some feedback didn't support this?**

Under s136 of the RMA Council must consider on a case-by-case basis permit transfers, and the National Policy Statement Freshwater Management requires Council to state the criteria by which applications for transfers are to be decided.

Council does not have a role in deciding what if any value should be attached to transferring water. We have to ensure that the use of water is efficient and that any effects of the transfer are consistent with plan requirements.

We've provided permitted activity status for temporary transfers within a water user group and restricted discretionary activity for transfers that don't meet requirements for permitted or controlled activity status.

### **Do we actually have a problem with water allocation in our region?**

There are two things that we need to consider now and as we move into the future, population growth and economic development, particularly of horticulture and farming. These two factors will need to be considered and how people and place impact this vital resource.

When assessed against the limits in this plan change almost two thirds of our streams are over allocated and some groundwater aquifers are allocated levels that exceed the limits. A growing population and expanding horticultural industries both need water.

We received feedback around considering efficiency of allocation and use. For example ensuring that the amount of water allocated to a user is consistent with their efficient use and that it is used efficiently need to become key features of the region's water policies. The plan change provides a supportive regime for water harvesting and storage that will reduce pressure on freshwater resources, and help to manage differences in water supply between seasons.

### **Do the changes to metering and permitted activity limits affect me if I'm on a water supply scheme or district/city council supplied water?**

People who take water from municipal water supply networks (or privately owned water supply schemes) are not directly affected by this plan change. The water supplier will have a resource consent to take the water and supply customers. The water supplier's rules about metering, use and payment are not set by the regional council. Any payments these water suppliers are normally to meet the cost of providing the water at your property, including drilling bores, pumping, treatment and reticulation.

In the plan change a special rule makes it easier for municipal water suppliers' to renew their resource consent and requires that a water management plan is developed to ensure that the amount of water allocated is no more than needed and will be used efficiently.



### **What are the implications for Māori?**

It is important for everyone, Māori and non-Māori alike to know that Plan Change 9 will help us all to address the urgent regional water allocation problems, unclear limits to water allocation and unauthorised use.

We had hui with Māori, and while many issues were discussed, one assurance is that the volume of water used at marae and urupa does not trigger a requirement for resource consent or water meters. There will also be more detailed community discussions within Water Management Areas which will result in further changes in future.

We encourage iwi to participate and we're working to ensure tangata whenua are informed about the plan change.

### **Are the implications the same for everyone?**

This is about all of us doing our part to for future generations.

We're working closely with industry and sector groups, Māori and landowners to ensure that what we're doing is good for everyone and is fair and cost effective. Council has worked and engaged with our communities and we've considered a range of alternative approaches to improving water management. There is no special water allocation to any group, the first in first served approach of the Resource Management Act applies to everyone.

### **What can I do to ensure my views are shared and heard by Council?**

Plan Change 9 was publically notified for submissions on 18 October 2016. Submissions will close 40 workings days later on 14 December 2016. A special form to assist you making a submission with all the necessary details is available. Submissions in electronic or written form can be accepted.

After submissions close, Council staff will summarise them and notify these for further submissions. Making a submission or further submission entitles you to present your views at a hearing. This will be in mid-2017.

### **When do rules have legal effect?**

As the plan change relates to water, it will have some effect once notified. Resource consent applications received after notification will be assessed against this plan change and the operative Regional Water and Land Plan.